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ANALYZE OF ANTHONY D. SMITH'S ETHNOCENTRIC APPROACH TO NATIONALISM

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethno-symbolist approach in nationalism emerge as a reaction to the hegemony of modernist theories. Therefore, their main arguments are also built upon the critic of modern theories.

Ethno-symbolist, as a word, is used to describe those who concentrate on the ethnic history and culture in order to analyze nationalism. They believe that nations don't come out of nowhere, in contrast, national identities are shaped within the myths, values and symbols of the past. Ethno-symbolism is also known as a "midway" between the primordialist and modernist approaches.

In this study, I will try to explain the contributions of Adam D. Smith's to the nationalist theories. First, I will summarize ethno-symbolism and then will explain Smith's approach.

2. ETHNOSYMBOLIST APPROACH TO NATIONALISM

The ethno-symbolist approach, which has emerged as a reaction to modernists, characterizes theorists who focus on the ethnic background. The term refers to an approach which emphasizes the role of myths, symbols, memories, values and traditions in the formation, persistence and change of ethnicity and nationalism. Even though nationalism is seen as a product of the modern age, the development process happens within a broad period. The myths, symbols, and customs from the past creates the frame and determine the content of today's nationalism. For them, the emergence of today's nations cannot be understood properly without taking their ethnic forebears into account; in other words, the rise of nations needs to be contextualized within the larger phenomenon of ethnicity which shaped them. Thus, the difference between today's nations and ethnic communities of the pre-modern era is basically a matter of development rather than being a different kind. They argue that ethnic identities change slower than we assume; once formed, they tend to be exceptionally durable under

'normal' vicissitudes of history, such as migrations, invasions, intermarriages, and to persist over many generations, even centuries. Thus, they see the modern version of nationalism as an evolution. They believe that modern era is no *tabula rasa.*

According to Smith, the ethno-symbolist approach is advantageous in three ways. First, the ethno-symbolist approach plays a role in determining which societies can form a nationalist movement when adequate conditions exist and in what shape it will form. Moreover, it enables the explanation of the role of memories, ceremonies, myths, and symbols in shaping nationalism. Materialist and modernist theories of nationalism fail to illuminate these issues as they are unable to comprehend the emotive power of collective memories. Finally, the ethno-symbolist approach explains the potential of nationalism to generate such a widespread popular support.

Above all, ethno-symbolic approach can help us to understand both the durability and the transformations of ethnicity in history and the continuing power and persistence of nations and nationalism at the start of the third millennium. This is because it directs our gaze to the inner worlds of the *ethnie* and the nation.

To sum up, we can say that ethno-symbolists differ from the primordialist with accepting the nationalism as a product of the modern era. On the other hand, they argue that it's not enough to explain nationalism with the theories who uses the processes of capitalism and industrialization, because these kinds of theories ignore the persistency of ethnic bonds. So, they prefer a perspective within a broad expense of history and also prefer to evaluate today's nations in a pot where they also evaluate their ethnic ancestors.

3. ANTHONY D. SMITH'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO NATIONALIST THEORIES

Smith differs from the other theorists of Ethnosymbolism as they were proponents of the modernist paradigm. Smith, on the other hand, builds his thought upon a critique of modernism. His central thesis is that modern nations cannot be understood without taking pre-existing ethnic components into account, the lack of which is likely to create a serious obstacle to 'nation-building'.

According to Smith, if we are to move beyond the generalizations of both modernism and primordialism, we need to formulate clear definitions of key terms like 'nation' and 'nationalism'. He says that the problem with modernist theories, is that they provide a definition, not of the nation, but of a particular kind of nation – the modern nation. What is needed is an ideal-typical definition of the nation, one that treats it as a general analytic category which can be applied to all continents and periods of history. Thus, he makes another definition of the nation: a nation is "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members". Such a definition shows the complex and abstract nature of national identity which is fundamentally multidimensional. Thus, the origins of nations are as complex as its nature, by asking the questions below, we might have a general explanation:

1. *Who* is the nation? What are the ethnic bases and models of modern nations? Why did these particular nations emerge?
2. *Why* and *how* does the nation emerge? That is, what are the general causes and mechanisms that set-in motion the process of nation-formation from varying ethnic ties and memories?
3. *When* and *where* did the nation arise?

3.1. *Who* is the nation?

For Smith, the answer to this first question should be looked for in earlier ethnic communities and in their bases because he sees nations of today as a continuity of old ethnic societies. Smith prefers to use the term *ethnie* for the ethnic community. Ethnie includes six key features:

1)A collective name
2) A common lineage of myth
3) Shared historical memories
4) Distinguishing element of common culture
5) The bond to the homeland
6) Solidarity

Smith identifies two main patterns of *ethnie* formation: coalescence and division. By coalescence he means the coming together of separate units, which in turn can be broken down

into processes of amalgamation of separate units such as city-states and of absorption of one unit by another as in the assimilation of regions. By division he means subdivision through fission, when a part of the ethnic community leaves it to form a new unit. Smith says that *ethnies* tend to be exceptionally durable. But that doesn't mean that they stand through history without any changes in their demographic or cultural contents. Smith admits that there are certain events that generate fundamental changes in the cultural contents of ethnic identities. Among these, he points war and conquest, exile and enslavement, the influx of immigrants and religious conversion. Nevertheless, what really matters is how far these changes reflect on and disrupt the sense of cultural continuity that binds generations together. For Smith, even the most radical changes cannot destroy this sense of continuity and common ethnicity.

Smith sets out to specify the main mechanisms of ethnic self-renewal. The first mechanism is 'religious reform'. Groups who fell prey to religious conservatism tried to compensate for the failure to introduce reforms by turning to other forms of self-renewal. The second mechanism is 'cultural borrowing', in the sense of controlled contact and selective cultural exchange between different communities. The third mechanism is 'popular participation'. The popular movements for greater participation in the political system saved many *ethnies* from fading away by generating a missionary zeal among the participants of these movements. The final mechanism is 'myths of ethnic election'. According to Smith, *ethnies* that lack such myths tended to be absorbed by others after losing their independence. Together, these four mechanisms ensure the survival of certain ethnic communities across the centuries despite changes in their demographic and cultural contents. These mechanisms also lead to the gradual formation of 'ethnic cores'. These 'cohesive and self-consciously distinctive *ethnies*' form the basis of states and kingdoms in later periods. Thus, locating the ethnic cores helps a great deal to answer the question 'who is the nation?'. Smith observes that most latter-day nations are constructed around a dominant *ethnie*, which annexed or attracted other ethnic communities into the state it founded and to which it gave a name and a cultural character. However, this observation is not sufficient to justify the origins of nations in the pre-modern era since there are many cases of nations formed without immediate ethnic antecedents. At this point, Smith lists three more reasons to support his case. First reason is that the first nations were formed on the basis of ethnic cores. Being powerful and culturally influential, these nations provided models for subsequent cases of nation- formation. The second reason is that this model sat easily on the pre-modern 'demotic' kind of community'. In the words of Smith, 'the ethnic model was sociologically fertile'. Finally, even when there were no ethnic

antecedents, the need to fabricate a coherent mythology and symbolism became everywhere paramount to ensure national survival and unity.

3.2. *Why* and *how* does the nation emerge?

The existence of pre-modern ethnic ties explains which units of population are likely to become nations, but it does not tell us why and how this transformation works. To answer the second question, we need to specify the main patterns of 'identity formation' and the factors that triggered their development. Smith begins by identifying two types of ethnic community, the 'lateral' (aristocratic) and the 'vertical' (demotic), noting that these two types gave birth to different patterns of nation formation.

'Lateral' *ethnies* were generally composed of aristocrats and higher clergy. Smith explains his choice of the term 'lateral' by pointing out that these *ethnies* were at once socially confined to the upper strata and geographically spread out to form close links with the upper echelons of neighboring lateral *ethnies*. As a result, their borders were 'ragged', but they lacked social depth.

On the contrary, 'vertical' *ethnies* were more compact and popular. Their culture was diffused to other sections of the population as well. Social cleavages were not underpinned by cultural differences. As a result of this, the ethnic bond was more intense and exclusive, and the barriers to admission were much higher

These two types of ethnic communities followed different paths in the process of becoming a nation. Smith calls the first, lateral, route 'bureaucratic incorporation'. The survival of aristocratic ethnic communities depended to a large extent on their capacity to incorporate other strata of the population within their cultural orbit. According to Smith, the primary vehicle in this process was the newly emerging bureaucratic state. Through a series of 'revolutions' in the administrative, economic and cultural spheres, the state was able to diffuse the dominant culture down the social scale. The major constituents of the 'administrative revolution' were the extension of citizenship rights, conscription, taxation and the building up of an infrastructure that linked distant parts of the realm. These developments were complemented by parallel 'revolutions' in economic and cultural spheres. Smith singles out two such processes as relevant to nation formation, namely the movement to a market economy and the decline of ecclesiastical authority. The latter was particularly important in that it allowed the development

of secular studies and of university learning. This, in turn, led to a 'boom' in popular modes of communication – novels, plays and journals. An important role was played in these processes by the intellectuals and professionals.

The second route of nation formation, what Smith calls 'vernacular mobilization', set out from a vertical *ethnie*. The influence of the bureaucratic state was more indirect in this case mainly because vertical *ethnies* were usually subject communities. Here, the key mechanism of ethnic persistence was organized religion. It was through myths, sacred texts and scripts, and the prestige of the clergy that the survival of communal traditions was ensured. To start with, ethnic culture usually overlapped with the wider circle of religious culture and loyalty, and there was no internal coercive agency to break the mould. Moreover, the members of the community simply assumed that they already constituted a nation, one without a political roof. Under these circumstances, the primary task of the secular intelligentsia was to alter the basic relationship between ethnicity and religion. In other words, the community of the faithful had to be distinguished from the community of historic culture. Smith identifies three different orientations among the intellectuals confronted with this dilemma: a conscious, modernizing return to tradition ('traditionalism'); a messianic desire to assimilate to Western modernity ('assimilation' or 'modernism'); and a more defensive attempt to synthesize elements of the tradition with aspects of Western modernity, hence to revive a pristine community modelled on a former golden age ('reformist revivalism'). The solution adopted by the intellectuals had profound implications for the shape, pace, scope and intensity of the process of nation formation. But whatever the solution espoused; the main task of an ethnic intelligentsia was 'to mobilize a formerly passive community into forming a nation around the new vernacular historical culture it has rediscovered'. In each case, they had to provide 'new communal self-definitions and goals', construct 'maps and moralities out of a living ethnic past'. This could be done in two ways: by a return to 'nature' and its 'poetic spaces' which constitute the historic home of the people and the repository of their memories; and by a cult of golden ages. These two methods were frequently used by the 'educator-intellectuals' to promote a national revival.

In his later work Smith identifies a third route of nation formation, that of the immigrant nations which consist largely of the fragments of other *ethnies*, particularly those from overseas, where colonist-immigrants have created a 'providentialist frontier nationalism' and this has encouraged a 'plural' conception of the nation, which accepts, even celebrates, ethnic and cultural diversity within an overarching political, legal, and linguistic national identity.

3.3. *When* and *where* did the nation arise?

The final question guiding Smith's framework, namely 'where and when did the nation arise'? This is where nationalism comes in. Nationalism, Smith contends, does not help us to determine which units of population are eligible to become nations, nor why they do so, but it plays an important part in determining when and where nations will emerge. The next step, then, is to consider the (political) impact of nationalism in a number of particular cases. Smith begins by noting that the term 'nationalism' has been used in five different ways:

1. the whole process of forming and maintaining nations;
2. a consciousness of belonging to the nation;
3. a language and symbolism of the 'nation':
4. an ideology (including a cultural doctrine of nations); and
5. a social and a political movement to achieve the goals of the nation and realize the national will.

Smith stresses the fourth and the fifth meanings most in his own definition. Hence, nationalism is 'an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential "nation"'. Autonomy refers to the idea of self- determination and the collective effort to realize the true, 'authentic', national will. Unity denotes the unification of the national territory and the gathering together of all nationals within the homeland. It also signifies the brotherhood of all nationals in the nation. Finally, identity means 'sameness', that is, that the members of a particular group are alike in those respects in which they differ from non-members, but it also implies the rediscovery of the 'collective self' (or the 'national genius').

On the other hand, the 'core doctrine' of nationalism consists of four central propositions:

1. The world is divided into nations, each with its own peculiar character, history and destiny.
2. The nation is the source of all political and social power, and loyalty to the nation has priority over all other allegiances.
3. Human beings must identify with a nation if they want to be free and realize themselves.
4. Nations must be free and secure if peace is to prevail in the world.

Smith then moves on to the types of nationalism, he identifies two kinds of nationalism: 'territorial' and 'ethnic' nationalisms, He insists that such a basic typology helps us to compare nationalisms within each category;

Territorial nationalisms

(a) *Pre-independence* movements based on a civic model of the nation

will first seek to eject foreign rulers, then establish a new state-nation on the old colonial territory; these are 'anti-colonial' nationalisms.

(b) *Post-independence* movements based on a civic model of the nation will try to bring together often disparate ethnic populations and integrate them into a new political community replacing the old colonial state; these are 'integration' nationalisms.

1. Ethnic nationalisms
    1. (a) *Pre-independence* movements based on an ethnic/genealogical model of the nation will seek to secede from a larger political unit and set up a new 'ethno-nation' in its place; these are 'secession' and 'diaspora' nationalisms.
    2. (b) *Post-independence* movements based on an ethnic/genealogical model of the nation will seek to expand by including ethnic kinsmen outside the present boundaries and establish a much larger 'ethno- nation' through the union of culturally and ethnically similar states; these are 'irredentist' and 'pan' nationalisms.

4. CONCLUSION

Generally speaking, Smith brought a new opening and criticism to the argument of the modernists which they have been created about nationalism to be formed from nothing in the past few centuries and shed light on where the power of the myth that modern nations have existed forever. In this context, Smith's views have neither been purely orientalist like primordialists nor pure modernists like modernists. Therefore, ethno-symbolism is often perceived as a midway between theories of nationalism.